

## PART V The Accident

At 1603 on 11 April 1961 Lt Fred G. Schenkel, pilot of F4H-1 BUNO 148425 (climax 112), and his Radar Intercept Officer, Lt N. H. WILSON Jr., were launched from USS Enterprise (CVA(N)65). LT Schenkel was No. 2 man of a flight of five F4H-1s. The flight was briefed for 1.3 hrs duration to rendezvous at 10,000 ft. overhead USS Enterprise, then to proceed to station 10 miles ahead of the ship at 4,000 ft. At about 1627 the flight flew by the ship in a close diamond formation at 600 ft. The flight then proceeded to a station 20 miles at 4,000 ft. ahead of the ship to join other aircraft in the Air Group for a mass fly-by. At approximately 1645, due to rapidly deteriorating local weather conditions, instructions were given to stop the air-show, conserve, and standby for Charlie. At about 1655 the aircraft were given the signal for immediate landing in the normal landing order (F4Hs first). The flight of F4Hs broke and the lead A/C was almost a beam in the landing configuration when, at 1705, the command was given to divert all aircraft to Myrtle Beach, S. C. Bearing and distance to Myrtle Beach was 279°, 95 miles.

The weather over the ship at this time was 500 ft. overcast, 2 mile visibility with light rain. The ship had been overtaken by a rapidly moving squall line oriented N.N.E to S.S.W. The areas East and South East of the ship were clear.

At the command to divert to Myrtle Beach the flight leader turned to the South East to rendezvous the flight in the clear area prior to penetrating the squall line on divert heading. LT Schenkel joined on the right wing of CDR (b) (6), the flight leader. All aircraft in the flight had sufficient fuel to arrive at Myrtle Beach with a comfortable margin of fuel reserve.

The flight entered the squall line weather at about 10,000 ft. in formation. Shortly thereafter the flight leader directed the flight to take 15° divergent changes for separation. At about 22,000 ft. the flight broke into a clear area and the flight leader observed LT Schenkel about 3/4 of a mile on the starboard side. LT Schenkel banked about 30 degrees toward the flight as if to rejoin the flight then entered another cloud layer. At about 27,000 ft. the flight broke into another clear area and the flight leader observed LT Schenkel about 3/4 of a mile on the port side with a 30° divergent heading. The flight was then about 45 miles East of Myrtle Beach. This was the last sight of LT Schenkel in Climax 112. The time was approximately 1717. At about 1720 the following series of transmissions were heard on land/launched frequency aboard the USS Enterprise, "we've lost pressurization, Fred, close your mask," "Close your mask, close your mask, we've lost pressurization," "we're in a dive, close your mask, we're in a dive, a dive, close your mask," followed by "This is (garbled believed to be III), Mayday, Mayday, Mayday, Mayday..."

On the basis of the Maydays, SAR was activated through Com Car Div 18 as per existing Op order at approximately 1727. A total of seventy eight aircraft were involved in the divert from the Task Group. By 2330 all other aircraft had been accounted for on deck except Climax 112.

SAR continued through the night and the following day at 1205 a life raft was spotted by a Coast Guard VF at 33-43N 77-36W. Two crew members aboard the VF reported seeing LT Wilson in the life raft waving.